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ABSTRACT

This booklet describes 18 children's activities which have been used successfully by children's librarians in southeastern Massachusetts. Ideas are presented for crafts workshops, contests, games and other activities, such as quilting, T-shirt printing, training for babysitters, pen pals, and photography. Performers and resource people listed include a clown, a magic show, two animal programs, and a UFO program. (PM)

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LIBRARY PROGRAMS
FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

An idea exchange among children's librarians of the New Bedford sub-Region, Eastern Massachusetts Regional Library System

Contributors:

- Francine Baptiste
- Karen Gagnon
- Carolyn Longworth
- Virginia Morrison
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Holly G. Willett

New Bedford Free Public Library
October, 1980

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
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INTRODUCTION

Although public libraries in Massachusetts are organized into Regions for the purposes of interlibrary loan, reference, and other forms of cooperation, it is difficult for children's librarians to meet regularly. Restricted budgets limit staff and travel allowances; as a result usually meetings are attended by library directors only. The Southeastern Subregion extends along the coast of Buzzards Bay from Plymouth to Swansea; there is more than an hour of expressway travel time between the two points.

Karen Gagnon of the Somerset Public Library located at the western end of the region suggested the exchange of program ideas as a way of diminishing our isolation and enlarging our individual repertoires. As the Coordinator of Children's Services at the subregional headquarters library I undertook the compilation and editing of the programs. It should be noted that some of the children's librarians in our area never had time to write about their favorite activities!

We offer our ideas to you as springboards for your own programs. Our best hope is that you will modify our suggestions to suit your community and your own creativity. Library activities for school age children are one of the ways children's librarians make bridges between the books on our shelves and our young clients. Programs extend the ideas and information contained in books into the realm of the actual.

Besides, they are just plain fun.

--Holly G. Willett
Coordinator of Children's Services
New Bedford Free Public Library

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MAKING STUFF

Quilting Workshop

In celebration of the International Year of the Child, fifteen girls aged 9-13 made a quilt which now hangs in the library. The first week the group met, we talked about themes and ideas for quilt design. Each girl was to be responsible for designing and sewing one square approximately 13" x 13".

To begin, the girls drew pictures of their favorite things..an object or activity of some sort. When the drawings were finished, they were enlarged and cut out to be used as patterns for the shapes to be appliqued on each square. In following sessions the girls practiced the buttonhole and overcast stitches on swatches of material. When they had mastered one or both of the stitches, they went on to baste the appliques onto the background fabric and then to sew around the outside edges of the shapes. Once the appliques were sewn in place, some of the girls added special details to their squares using embroidery thread. For instance, one girl chose to make the strings of a tennis racquet by running black embroidery thread back and forth in basket weave fashion. Another used embroidery thread to depict laces on her roller skates.

When all the squares were completed, a border was sewn around each and then the squares were sewn together. Then the front of the quilt was sewn to the back with fiber-fill between the two layers. Last of all, a couple of stitches were taken through all three layers at the corners of each square to create a tiny tuft for decoration and to link the layers together.

The quilt was done entirely in solid colors -- white, orange, red, green, yellow were the colors used for the squares with a navy blue border. It was a lot of work and definitely not an overnight project. All of the stitching was done by hand. The children enjoyed the project and are extremely proud of the result. Perhaps as much as the sewing experience, the girls seemed to enjoy the social exchange that this type of "quiet" activity provides. This extra enjoyment seems to be a part of the tradition of quilting.

--Karen Gagnon
Somerset Public Library

T-shirt printing

We used special crayons put out by Crayola. The child's design is drawn first, then colored in with these crayons on white paper. 8½" x 11" is a good size. The design will come out reversed when it is ironed onto the T-shirt. Since an adult does the actual ironing-on of the designs, there is really no age limit to this project. It's a lot easier, though, to have more than one iron-equipped adult on hand. The shirts must be all-cotton and in light colors. Newspapers make a thick pad for the ironing and a piece of cardboard inside the shirt will keep the design from bleeding through.

--Carolyn Longworth
Millicent Library,
Fairhaven

Filmstrip Workshop for children aged 8 and up

The filmstrip workshop requires a few special materials. If you buy a film-strip-making kit you get most of what you need, excluding the projection and recording equipment. The kit contains storyboard preparation sheets, film, pencils and sharpener, filmstrip containers, and frames for making slides.

A filmstrip workshop can be a showplace for children's creative writing talents. Before any illustrating is done, they are asked to write a short story. Sometimes it is necessary to use some motivating techniques, i.e., story starters, to get things rolling. For instance, you can suggest several opening sentences which could lead in many directions, or introduce a few unusual and descriptive words to be included in the stories. At times a bit of storytelling can help to prod their imaginations. Or just some oral exchange of funny or important incidents in their lives can produce the needed spark. I have sometimes taped these informal personal stories and played them back to the kids to help them develop their ideas fully. Getting them to relax and write freely can be difficult. It is helpful to use many approaches because what works for one child may not work for them all.

Once the stories are down on paper, they should be broken up into a series of thoughts or happenings, which can be illustrated individually. Each idea is written on the bottom of a sheet of typing paper with a corresponding illustration drawn above. When the entire story has been illustrated in this fashion, the children are then asked to illustrate their story on a story board preparation sheet. This requires that they reduce the size of their drawings significantly. (Note: Some people prefer not to use the typing paper method of preparing the illustrations and begin with the story board sheets immediately. I feel that, initially, children need extra space to develop their illustrations fully.) Storyboard sheets should be abundant so that they can re-work their drawings until they are happy with the results. Once this is done, the job of illustrating the film can begin.

When the filmstrips are complete, the children can then record their stories on tape, making sure that signals be included to tell the projectionist when to advance the filmstrip. At this point, background music and sound effects can be added. Our filmstrip show turned out to be relatively short, so we included a brief skit to break up the program. I've found that children also like to write and perform their own commercials which can add to the fun. At any rate, we were all pleased with the finished product, so I'm planning another workshop for this fall.

--Karen Gagnon
Somerset Public Library

Monster Parade

Ask the children to bring large brown paper shopping bags and some kind of noisemaker. In the narrow sides of each bag cut out rounded slots so that the bag will rest on the child's shoulders. The slots should be about six inches deep. Put the bag over the child's head and ask him/her to put his/her fingers on his/her eyes and nose. Mark these places with crayons or felt pen. Take the bag off the child, cut out the eye and nose holes and give the bag to the child to decorate.

Monster Parade - continued

If they are shown the whole process beforehand, using another adult as a model, and also shown a sample finished mask, they will quickly think up ways to turn the shopping bag into gruesome faces, using crayons, felt markers, construction paper, foil, etc. Mask-making can take 30-45 minutes depending on the size of the group.

When the masks are finished, the children put them on and take up their noise-makers. They form a parade. Depending on your circumstances, they can parade indoors and out, but one adult should march at head and foot at least. As they parade, the children use their noisemakers. An older boy can usually be persuaded to beat on an upside down metal wastebasket, and a banner announcing the library's name is a nice touch.

(We tried putting the Monsters on rollerskates, but it is hard to see well enough to skate in a mask).

--Holly Willett
New Bedford Free Public Library

Glue-In

This is a cheap and easy craft program which encourages individual creativity because it is unstructured. The basis for it is wood scraps, donated by the woodshop teacher at your local senior or junior high, and Elmer's glue. Other interesting things can be used with the wood: styrofoam meat trays, cardboard cylinders, egg cartons, fabric, macaroni, old jewelry, whatever your imagination can dream up and your staff and patrons donate. Scissors and q-tips are helpful.

The materials are laid out on tables with some of each kind in strategic spots. The glue is poured into plastic margarine tubs and can be applied with q-tips. The children are asked to sit down until the whole group is gathered, and then they are told that they will be allowed to make whatever they want and asked to share the glue. Then they are turned loose.

Some children will make very realistic constructions. Others like fantastic abstract shapes. Count on about one hour from start to finish, and ask that the last ones help you clean up. Some children may be stymied and need encouragement to try moving shapes around together experimentally before glueing. The results of this make a fascinating display, if you can convince the creators to loan them to you!

--Holly Willett
New Bedford Free Public Library

Self-portraits

1. Silhouettes were received well. Materials needed are a filmstrip projector or flashlight, black paper, chalk, scissors, paste and white construction paper.

2. Children have outlined themselves on wide table paper. With yarn, scraps of fabric, crayons, etc., they have made pictures of themselves.

--Virginia Morrison
Southworth Library
So. Dartmouth

Easter Egg Decorating

Before the actual egg decorating a day was set aside for children to drop in for a personal demonstration of egg-blowing. A demonstration takes 15 minutes at the most. Children brought their own raw eggs.

We had separate sessions for children in grades K through 4 and 5 through 8. On the day of the decorating, children brought as many blown eggshells as they wished to decorate. The library provided all the decorating materials except dye; anyone who wanted dyed eggs did the dyeing at home beforehand. Scrap materials were glued to the eggshells, i.e., ribbon, paper, yarn, foil, cotton balls, pipe cleaners, etc. Felt markers were used to draw on the eggs, but we found that self-stick stickers didn't always work. We did not show any samples to the children because I feel that stifles their imaginations. Children borrow and adapt ideas from each other, which I prefer. Decorated eggs were put into nut cups and suspended from the branches with four pieces of yarn. Using nut cups had the advantage of not breaking any eggs, and on the bottom of each cup we put the child's registration number for identification.

--Bette Jean Souza
Westport Free Public Library

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Hodge-Podge

The Howland-Green branch of the New Bedford Free Public Library holds an annual Children's fair on the Saturday after school is out for summer vacation. Depending on staffing, it lasts from two to four hours. Emphasis is on lots to do. Local organizations, such as the Children's Museum and the Buttonwood Zoo bring exhibits, and local talent donates face-painting and puppet shows. Past and present library staffers help with T-shirt transfers, planting marigolds, mask-making, games, and a bubble gum blowing contest. Simple crafts, such as wallpaper collage and macaroni stringing are put out for children to work on by themselves.

Some events, such as the puppet show, have a definite time, others go on during the entire period.

This event is very adaptable to particular situations. It makes good public relations, and there is nearly always something for the newspaper to photograph. It does take thorough advance preparation and staff commitment, but it is well worth the effort. This year more than 150 children and parents participated.

BABYSITTERS' TRAINING CLASS

Karen Gagnon - Somerset Public Library

Once a year, usually in the spring, we run a 4-week program for children aged ten and up who wish to learn more about babysitting. While we don't encourage ten-year-olds to take on the responsibility of caring for young children, the fact is that parents sometimes do.

Each week's session lasts about an hour and fifteen minutes. The program usually runs as follows:

GENERAL INFORMATION

Week 1--We hand out booklets about babysitting and ask that the kids read at least one thoroughly by the next session. (The booklets are free from the agencies listed at the end of this description). Then we talk about the tremendous responsibility of babysitting, how to make the job easier, and the importance of using sound judgment when making decisions. For example, babysitters are taught to expect detailed information from the parents before they leave the house, i.e., where they can be reached, what time they will return and any special instructions regarding care of the children.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Babysitters' Training Class - continued

FIRE SAFETY & FIRST AID

Week 2--Usually the second week is handled by a representative from the local fire department who discusses fire safety and emergency situations. A demonstration using a baby dummy supplements the talk.

TOY SAFETY

Week 3--We show a toy safety film, "Bubble, Bubble, Toys and Trouble." Next we discuss the film and talk about the Seven Toy Dangers listed on a hand-out. Ways to safely entertain children using books, games and toys are covered. Sitters are encouraged to put together their own portable collection of toys in what we call a Super Sitters Surprise Box.

PREPARING MEALS

Week 4--Sitters learn simple, nutritional ways to prepare food for children without using the stove. With peanut butter, raisins, cheese, celery, jam, bread, etc., they practice making snacks. The A-to-Z No-Cook Cookbook by Felipe Rojas-Lombardi is a good source for this type of activity. At the end of the fourth session the kids are tested orally on some of the material covered in all sessions and those who have attended each week receive a certificate for participation.

Babysitting Booklets:

The Pocket Guide to Babysitting
U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
Office of Human Development Services/Administration for Children, Youth & Families
Children's Bureau 1974
Washington, D.C. 20201

Sitting Safely for Baby Sitters
Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.
Health and Welfare Division
1 Madison Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10010

The Super Sitter
Superintendent of Documents
U. S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

The Babysitters' Training Class has been a popular program and one which we consider a service to parents as well as children. We would recommend it to other libraries.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

COOKATHON

Karen Gagnon - Somerset Public Library

Every other year we plan what we call a "Cookathon" for children of all ages. Entrants are required to select a recipe (preferably from a cookbook on reserve at the Library) try it out, and enter it in the cooking contest. We ask that food which must be kept hot or cold not be entered, as we don't have the facilities to keep it fresh.

On the day of the contest, the entries are due at the Library by 11:00 AM. Judging takes place from 11:00 AM-1:00 PM and at 1:00 the results are announced. We make sure that everyone leaves with some sort of prize. This year all participants received decorated recipe cards, refrigerator magnets, and lollipops. Nine main prizes were awarded. Two people in each of three age categories won prizes. The categories were: 5 and 6 year-olds; 7 to 9 year-olds; and 10 to 12 year-olds. In addition, three special prizes were awarded for unusual entries. This year's winning recipes included a checkerboard cake, caramel apples, a cake shaped like an open book, and oriental green beans.

If you decide to try this idea, be sure to select an odd number of judges and suggest that they have a light breakfast!

PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

Bette Souza - Westport Free Public Library

One of the most popular programs we have had in Westport has been our Pen Pal Exchange program. I started the Pen Pal Exchange as an International Year of the Child Program. In roughly one year we handed out over 450 pen pal names.

For various reasons we are about to close down the exchange, but I still have names (particularly teenagers from Africa) of prospective correspondents. If any library is interested in starting such a program, I will be pleased to pass on all of the information I have, plus letters of introduction to librarians in Australia, Singapore, and Africa.

For further information, please feel free to call me at 636-4317.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

PHOTO CONTEST

Bette Souza - Westport Free Public Library

THEME: My Life in Westport, Massachusetts

CONTESTANTS: Grades 5-8 and Grades 9-12

- RULES:
1. Contestants MUST take photos themselves.
 2. Pictures should express an aspect of life in Westport that is important to them.
 3. Photos will be judged on an expression of theme.
 4. Prizes will be awarded (1st and 2nd) in each category.

- PROCEDURE:
1. Bring pictures to the library between May 1 and May 19.
 2. Photos will be judged during the week of May 21.
 3. Winners will be notified by May 26.
 4. Photos will remain in display until May 31.
 5. After the contest, photos may be picked up anytime between June 1 and June 15. Photos remaining after June 15 will become property of the Library.

Name:

Grade:

Phone Number:

Address:

I promise that I chose the idea for this photograph myself and that I photographed the subject without help from anyone.

Signed _____

T-SHIRT SLOGAN CONTEST

An idea from THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARIAN'S ALMANAC (Weisburg & Toor, 1979, pp. 75-6) was expanded into a city-wide contest for National Children's Book Week.

Children were invited to submit book or reading slogans on mimeographed blank T-shirts. The entries were displayed in the Center Library and judged by the Library Director and Administrative Secretary. A local T-shirt printer donated shirts with their slogans imprinted to the boy and girl who won. The program was very popular; staff estimates that at least 150 children entered. A number of teachers used it as an art project for their classes.

—Francine Baptiste
New Bedford Free Public Library

PERFORMERS & RESOURCE PEOPLE

UFO'S

Since I held this program two years ago, I'm not sure whether the group is still in existence. It was called Monitor East (it may have changed its name) and the representative was Richard St. Germain, 85 Irving Ave., Providence, RI 02906. (Phone: 401-274-7117). He told me that the group was planning to produce a slide tape program on astronomy that he hoped to circulate in the schools. He charged the library \$45 because he had to take the morning off from work. He has taught personal enrichment courses on UFO'S at Bristol Community College. The talk he gave at the library was suitable for people aged 9 to adult. He brought in slides of UFO'S and old stories about local sightings. When Question and Answer time came, he invited questions on all types of phenomena -- Loch Ness monster, Bigfoot, Yeti. One kid asked something about time warps or something and the ensuing discussion was very interesting. He seemed to know everything the kids referred to and listened to them and their suggestions. If the library has money like this to spare on a program, it would be worth it. Many adults also came back to comment about it.

-- Carolyn Longworth
Millicent Library
Fairhaven

THE SILENT CLOWN

In terms of outside entertainment for library programs, the best we've found so far has been The Silent Clown from Providence, RI. Gary Girouard gives a colorful, fast-paced, and suspenseful performance. He never says a word, yet holds the attention of the audience for the entire program. His act includes magic, mime, juggling, puppets, balloon animals and chalk drawings. He also knows how to ride a unicycle (if you have the room). His fee is approximately \$65.00.

Triple G Gallery
71 Empire Street
Providence, RI 02903
Tues. - Friday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
(401) 331-3203 - work
725-1468 - home

--Karen Gagnon
Somerset Public Library

PERFORMERS & RESOURCE PEOPLE

MAGIC SHOW

Staff at the Southworth and New Bedford Libraries recommend:

Lynne Dillies
15 Laurel Lane
Westport, MA 02790

ANIMALS

1. Bob Bailey of the Children's Museum of No. Dartmouth has a variety of animals and slide presentations. He does charge a small fee.

Children's Museum/Museum Outdoors
100 Old Westport Road
No. Dartmouth, MA 02747
617-993-3361

2. The Animal Rescue League has a Humane Education program which includes a filmstrip on pet care. They will also bring a puppy and kitten for children to handle and watch and give out booklets to the children.

Animal Rescue League
126 MacArthur Drive
New Bedford, MA 02740
617-999-2349

BEEKEEPER

David and Eli Mendes are commercial beekeepers who travel from Maine to Florida pollinating orchards and preparing their own honey. Both are in their early 20's. David did a fine program for us last summer, which included a slide/tape presentation, a hive (without bees), beekeeper's veil and smoker, other equipment, large charts of bee anatomy and cranberry blossom honey. He had a good rapport with the children and is interested in doing the program again. Since he travels and attends college, he is usually available in the summer. He did not charge us.

David Mendes
Mendes Apiaries
P. O. Box 22
So. Dartmouth, MA 02748
617-997-0186 - after 5 p.m.

--Holly Willett
New Bedford Free Public Library